

PARENTS' METHODS OF REARING CHILDREN BILINGUALLY
AND A POSSIBLE APPLICATION OF THEIR METHODS
IN A LANGUAGE PROGRAM FOR THE SCHOOLS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Since the discovery of the New World, immigrants from many lands have settled in America. Each person brought with him his own cultural mores, heritage, and language. As a result the United States has often been termed the "melting pot of the world." But this pot has never reached the "boiling point"¹ and some groups still retain many of their traditions and, not infrequently, their native language. In 1960, a full 11 per cent of the population of the United States possessed a non-English mother tongue.²

Because of the wide occurrence of bilingualism, many research projects have been made to determine its effects, advantages and disadvantages. The conclusions of these projects are extremely varied and contradictory. Bilingualism has been proven to be good, bad or indifferent to a child's intellectual development, depending on the study. Bilingual parents, in reflection of the controversy about their language duality, have emphasized the importance of two languages by teaching both languages to their children or have taught their children only one language so as to remove the supposed stigma of being foreign.

¹Einar Haugen, The Norwegian Language in America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), p. 3.

²Joshua A. Fishman, "The Status and Prospects of Bilingualism in the United States," The Modern Language Journal, XLIX (March, 1965), 143.

The Problem

It was the purpose of this study (1) to find by questionnaire if a group of American bilingual parents were rearing their children bilingually and, if so, what methods they were using; (2) to compile the results of the questionnaire with those of a similar study by Ruth Metraux³ among American-French parents; and (3) to apply the parents' methods to a classroom situation.

Importance of the Study

In recent years the American schools have begun to emphasize foreign language instruction as a result of the increasing need for international communication and cooperation. But an individual learning a second language in school seldom achieves the fluency and accuracy of a native speaker of the language. Therefore, it seems evident that the United States should take advantage of the natural resource of bilinguals by cultivating rather than eliminating their skills. The methods which create natural bilinguals should be effective in forming classroom bilinguals.

Limitations of the Study

Due to difficulty in finding bilingual parents, the sample population for the study was not as large as would be desirable nor

³Ruth Metraux, "A Study of Bilingualism among Children of U. S. -French Parents," The French Review XXXVIII (April, 1965), 650-655.

was there any way of determining whether it was representative of the entire bilingual population of the United States. However, 80 per cent of the questionnaires were returned; so the group studied may be considered a valid sample of the larger group to whom questionnaires were sent.

The French sample, although larger than the American one, was nonetheless small, and only twenty-five of forty questionnaires were returned. Although not numerous enough to be statistically significant, the combined groups seemed to represent most segments of the whole bilingual population and offered many suggestions for rearing children bilingually.

Definitions of Terms

Bilingual. A bilingual person is one who speaks two or more languages with some fluency. In this study it will not be interpreted as meaning equal skill in both languages as is the strict definition of the term.

Natural bilingual. By the term "natural bilingual" is meant an individual who learned two languages from the time he was a child as opposed to a bilingual who might have learned one of his languages in school.

Mother tongue. The mother tongue is the first language spoken and understood by an individual.

Monolingual. A monolingual is a person who speaks and understands one language.

American group or sample. The American group or sample refers to the people who filled out the questionnaire for the present study. They are currently residents of the Manhattan, Kansas, area whether they be American citizens or not.

French group or sample. The French group or sample is not necessarily composed of French nationals. They are residents of France and participated in Mrs. Metraux' study of bilingualism which will be used for comparison in this study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Much has been written about the subject of bilingualism, where it exists, why it exists, what it is, and remedies for those whom it affects. However, only a brief discussion of those articles which deal directly with the influence of bilingualism on intelligence or methods of rearing children bilingually is presented here.

Literature Concluding that Bilingualism is Disadvantageous

J. Vernon Jense⁴, in an article summarizing the good and bad effects of bilingualism, stated that one often believed characteristic

⁴J. Vernon Jensen, "Effects of Childhood Bilingualism," Elementary English, XXXIX (February, 1962), pp. 132-143.

of bilingualism was that it handicapped intellectual development. A child tended to speak in one language and think in another, particularly if he had only a superficial knowledge of one language or if he were not of superior intellectual ability. The child thereby became confused which caused retarded speech development, smaller vocabulary, slowness in school and emotional instability. Society in general also suffered because of the resultant breakdown in family communication and cultural bonds.

A study conducted in Frontenac, Kansas, by Sara Stephens⁵ compared the I. Q. 's, achievement scores and socio-economic status of foreign-born and American junior high school pupils. On every achievement test the native speakers surpassed the foreign-born even though the former were, on the average, six months younger than the latter. The author noted, however, that the foreign-born were 30 per cent lower in socio-economic status and that the handicap was less obvious in the ninth grade than in the seventh or eighth. She also stated that the students should not be classified on the basis of test scores alone.

⁵Sara Stephens, "A Comparison of the Achievement in English of the Pupils in whose Homes English is the Only Language Spoken with those in whose Homes a Foreign Language is also Spoken" (unpublished Master's thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, Pittsburg, 1930).

A similar study by Nellie R. Rankin⁶ produced much the same results. She found that the English-foreign pupils suffered a handicap which was more evident on the English tests than in the other areas of achievement. They had reading difficulties, so she concluded that non-reading tests may have produced higher scores. Miss Rankin encouraged the creation of special classes and activities to better the English of the bilingual pupils.

A psychologist, David T. Hakes,⁷ stated that the problems of learning a first language were simply multiplied when learning a second. He said that often the words in two languages are not synonymous so a bilingual must learn two sets of categorical responses. In addition, the bilingual must learn to distinguish what audience to speak which language to.

Literature Concluding that Bilingualism is Advantageous

One common argument for bilingualism, according to J. Vernon Jensen,⁸ was that it sharpened the mind, brought

⁶ Nellie R. Rankin, "The Extent to Which Junior High School Pupils from Foreign Speaking Homes are Handicapped in English" (unpublished Master's thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, Pittsburg, 1931).

⁷ David T. Hakes, "Psychological Aspects of Bilingualism," The Modern Language Journal, XLIX (April, 1965), pp. 220-227.

⁸ J. Vernon Jensen, "Effects of Childhood Bilingualism," Elementary English, XXXIX (April, 1962) pp. 353-366.

greater insight into life, broadened mental horizons, and enriched life. Having two words for one object made bilinguals focus on ideas rather than words and content rather than form. Jensen cited studies which indicated that a slight handicap may have existed in the elementary grades, but by college age bilingualism was a definite advantage, strengthening the known languages and facilitating the learning of others. In addition, the prestige of knowing another language stimulated the bilingual child. And, bilingualism was an asset to society in that it aided understanding of and communication with more people.

In discussing the evolution of the Norwegian language in America, Einar Haugen fringed on the question of the effect of bilingualism on intelligence.

It is not like monolingualism, a skill that is asked of all, or that is acquired by all without specialized effort. The psychological process seems to demand a more precise adjustment of motor skills, a more delicate balance of neural responses, which differ from that of ordinary monolingual speaking in ways that may be described as qualitative and not merely quantitative.⁹

So, he continued, a truly bilingual individual had an advantage over a monolingual.

⁹ Haugen, op. cit., p. 5.

Joshua A. Fishman¹⁰ said in his article that current international affairs and the fact that in 1960, 11 per cent of the American population had a non-English mother tongue were causing a return to the thinking that bilingualism was favorable. A Language Resources Project was created to protect bilingualism because it was favorable to the American society.

Theodore Anderson,¹¹ with his conviction that bilingualism was favorable, suggested eliminating high school language classes in order to start languages in the first grade by mixing bilinguals and monolinguals. Thus the learning process would more nearly approximate that of a natural situation.

Literature Concluding that Bilingualism per se Has Little Effect

That there was no relation between bilingualism and intelligence where everyone was of similar class and of similar bilinguality was the conclusion of Joshua A. Fishman.¹² Those socialized in verbally unstimulating environments developed

¹⁰Joshua A. Fishman, "The Status and Prospects of Bilingualism in the United States, The Modern Language Journal, XLIX (March, 1965), pp. 143-145.

¹¹Theodore Anderson, "A New Focus on the Bilingual Child," The Modern Language Journal, XLIX (April, 1965), pp. 156-160.

¹²Joshua A. Fishman, "Bilingualism, Intelligence and Language Learning, The Modern Language Journal, XLIX (April, 1965), pp. 227-237.

less verbal proficiency, monolingual or bilingual. On the other hand, the elite with bilingual tutors and good education were in general more gifted verbally. Therefore, it was the role relations and socio-cultural processes in multilingual situations which were important.

Seth Arsenian,¹³ after having reviewed many arguments for and against bilingualism, concluded from his own research that bilingualism was not of a single kind. Rather, psychological and social conditions, as well as age, method and circumstance of learning the second language, influenced the process. He found that it was an advantage to the bright and a handicap to the retarded. In general the influence of bilingualism depended on the educational opportunities surrounding the child.

Another article which agreed with the premise that the education received in both tongues determined the effect of bilingualism was written by A. Bruce Gaardner.¹⁴ It could be an invaluable intellectual and social advantage or could interfere with a full measure of personal development, depending on the

¹³ Seth Arsenian, Bilingualism and Mental Development (Contributions to Education, no. 712. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937), p. 123.

¹⁴ A. Bruce Gaardner, "Teaching the Bilingual Child: Research, Development and Policy," The Modern Language Journal, XLIX (March, 1965), pp. 165-175.

circumstances. According to Mr. Gaardner, the United States neglected foreign languages and needed to revamp the educational system for the bilingual.

Chester C. Christian, Jr.¹⁵ suggested that the United States take advantage of the underdeveloped resource of bilinguals. These individuals were often a submerged group because the educational system forced them to be. The school program should therefore be modified.

Literature on Parental Methods of Teaching Children Two Languages

Mr. Totten,¹⁶ in an article written from personal experience, generalized on rearing children bilingually from the success he had with his own daughter. His recipe for teaching bilingualism was

- 1) to chose a language which either or both parents spoke well;
- 2) to begin when the child was young; 3) to devote special times to the language; 4) to have authority to overcome resistance; and
- 5) to use outside stimuli such as records, songs, stories, relatives, friends, and trips to the other country. Problems he encountered were reminding the children to speak the second language, mixing languages, accents, and cultural attitudes.

¹⁵ Chester C. Christian, Jr., "The Acculturation of the Bilingual Child," *The Modern Language Journal*, XLIX (March, 1965), pp. 160-165.

¹⁶ G. O. Totten, "Bringing Up Children Bilingually," American Scandinavian Review, XLVIII (March, 1960), pp. 42-46.

In his review of literature Seth Arsenian¹⁷ cited several descriptions of rearing children bilingually. Monjat used the "une personne une langue" method and reported that his son became equally at home in both. Meuss, on the other hand, noted that his son switched from right-to left-handedness as he changed from Dutch to German, and he began to stutter. Arsenian emphasized the need for individually adapted methods.

PROCEDURES USED

A questionnaire adapted from the results of Ruth Metraux¹⁸ was given to twenty-one sets of bilingual parents in the Manhattan area. Seventeen of the questionnaires were completed and returned; one was sent back unanswered.

The questionnaire. The questionnaire (see Appendix) consisted of fifteen questions concerning the degree of bilingualism of the children, the methods used in teaching the children two languages, and the problems encountered in the process. In addition certain statistical information as to age, place of birth, where the children went to school and number of languages spoken was requested.

¹⁷ Arsenian, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁸ Metraux, op. cit. Since Mrs. Metraux' article figures prominently in the remainder of the report and has already been identified several times, it will not be footnoted again.

The groups studied. The names of the parents for the American sample were supplied by the International Activities Center at Kansas State University, the United Nations Woman's Club, Luckey High School in Manhattan, Kansas, and Manhattan High School with the permission of William Robinson, Manhattan Superintendent of Schools.

The French group used for comparison in this report was studied by Ruth Metraux and the results were published in the April, 1965, issue of The French Review. All parents in this group were members of the Association of American Wives of Europeans in Paris. She sent out forty questionnaires of which number twenty-five were returned.

Treatment of data. The results of the questionnaires given to the French and American groups were compiled and classified according to the methods and aids used and the problems encountered. The parents' methods and suggestions were combined to give a broader scope to the study and, therefore, a wider application to the results. A statistical comparison was not attempted because the two groups were not sufficiently similar in socio-economic background, nor were the groups large enough.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In this section the results of the American questionnaire are compiled with those of the French one.

The Parents

The parents of the American group were of diverse national backgrounds and although most had become permanent residents of the United States, others were here temporarily as visiting professors or students at Kansas State University. Their backgrounds, as indicated by their native languages are shown in Table I. Only six of the fathers and one mother for a total of seven of the thirty-four parents were native English speakers. The rest came from other origins. Only seven of the marriages were cross-cultural, these being an American man to a Danish woman, four American men to German women, an Arab to an American woman, and a French-American to a French woman.

In contrast, the French group, as reported by Mrs. Metraux, was less diverse. Twenty-two of the twenty-five fathers were native French speakers while twenty-two of the twenty-five mothers were native English speakers. Mrs. Metraux did not indicate how many cross-cultural marriages there were in her sample, but the native languages of the French parents suggest that the large majority were.

Table II contains certain statistics about the parents in both groups. The age range of the seventeen fathers in the American sample was thirty-one to fifty-eight; of the mothers, twenty-four to fifty-one. Both of these were greater than the age ranges of the parents in the French group, although the two groups were

TABLE I
THE NATIVE LANGUAGES OF THE
PARENTS IN THE FRENCH AND
AMERICAN SAMPLES

Native Language	French Sample		American Sample	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
English	1	22	6*	1
French	22	3	(1)	1
Polish	1		1	
Spanish	1		4	4
Arabic			1	
Slovenian			2	2
Czech			1	1
German			1	5
Hebrew				1
Danish				1
Dutch			1	1

*One of these fathers spoke both French and English from the time he was a child. He is indicated with the French speakers in parentheses.

TABLE II
A STATISTICAL COMPARISON OF THE
PARENTS IN THE FRENCH AND
AMERICAN SAMPLES

Item of Comparison	French Sample		American Sample	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Number	25	25	17	17
Age range	37-57	25-48	31-56	24-51
Education	B.A. - Ph. D.	B.S. - M.A.	gr. 6 - Ph. D.	gr. 2 - M. A.
Occupation	top 2 lev. *	19/25 H. W.	4 lev. *	16/17 H. W.
Monolingual	1	2	3	1
Bilingual	13	16	5	6
Trilingual	5	7	3	5
Quadralingual	4	-	4	3
5 languages	1	-	2	-
7 languages	1	-	-	-

*D. G. Paterson, C. d'A Gerken, and M. Hahn, The Minnesota Occupational Rating Scale, revised (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1953).

The categories are as follows:

Level A (Professional, Semi-professional, and executive occupations--top 10% of the population)

Level B (Technical, Clerical, Supervisory--15% of the population)

Level C (Skilled tradesmen, low level, low grade clerical workers and the like--middle 50% of the population)

Level D (Unskilled workers--bottom 25% of the population).

comparable in that the largest proportion of the parents were in their thirties. The degree of education was also more varied in the American group with the lowest amount for the fathers being sixth grade and for the mothers, second grade. In contrast, all of the French fathers had at least a Bachelor's degree while the mothers had all finished high school.

The occupations of the French fathers all fell within the top two categories according to The Minnesota Occupational Rating Scale. These levels include only about the upper 25 per cent of the entire population. On the other hand, the American fathers pursued occupations at all four levels. The majority of the wives in both groups did not work outside the home. The number of languages spoken by both groups was large. Of the French sample, 36 per cent spoke at least three and 50 per cent of the American group were also trilingual.

The Children

As shown in Table III, the American group contained twenty-seven boys and twenty girls for a total of forty-seven children. Mrs. Debraux also had a total of forty-seven children for her sample. The American children tended to be older than the French with 76 per cent of the Americans already in school while only 58 per cent of the French were of school age. The largest number of

TABLE III
A STATISTICAL COMPARISON OF
THE CHILDREN IN THE FRENCH
AND AMERICAN GROUPS

	French Sample			American Sample			Total
	Boys	Girls	sub tot.	Boys	Girls	sub tot.	
Number	25	22	47	27	20	47	94
Age range	15m. - 24y. 18m. - 20c			18m. - 24y. 6m. - 24y.			
Freshcool	10	8	18	5	6	11	29
Primary	12	6	18	12	7	19	37
Secondary	1	5	6	4	6	10	16
College	2	3	5	6	1	7	12

the American sample were of primary school age whereas in the French group, those of preschool age were equal in number to those in primary school.

The place of birth of the children in both groups is shown in Table IV. All but three of the French sample were born in France or the United States while twenty-eight of the forty-seven American children were born in the United States. Just as the American parents represented a larger number of nationalities, the American children were also born in various countries although more than half were natives of the United States.

In both groups the largest percentage of children attended, or would attend upon reaching school age, schools in the country of residence. Nineteen of the twenty-five French boys and fifteen of the twenty-two girls attended French schools. Three boys and one girl attended American schools; one boy and two girls were in bilingual schools; one boy and one girl were at French Universities.

Of the American sample, twenty-five boys and eighteen girls attended American schools; one boy and two girls attended Yugoslavian schools; and one boy would probably be sent to Denmark for his education. Four boys and two girls planned to attend University in Mexico. Of the children who attended

TABLE IV

THE PLACE OF BIRTH OF THE
CHILDREN IN BOTH GROUPS

Birthplace	French Sample		American Sample	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Columbia				1
United States	10	10	10	12
France	12	11		
Algiers	1			
Belgium	1			
Chad		1		
Israel			2	
Egypt			1	1
Mexico			4	1
Germany			3	1
Cuba				1
Yugoslavia			1	2
Holland				1

American schools, several had also been students abroad. One boy and two girls had spent some time in German schools; three boys and two girls had attended Italian schools; and one girl had gone to a French school in Switzerland.

The degree of bilingualism of the children in both groups is indicated in Table V. The French sample contained a larger number of absolute bilinguals: eight as compared with six for the American group. The American sample had twelve monolinguals or 26 per cent, rather than 11 per cent for the French sample. The largest category for the combined groups was "bilingual with one language dominating." Here the French contributed eleven children and the American thirteen for a total of twenty-four out of ninety-four. Following closely behind were those speaking one language well plus a certain amount of another, in which category were fifteen French and seven American children for a total of twenty-two. In the American group eight children were indicated as speaking a third language well, but English dominated over both the second and third languages for six of the children while the others were rated as absolutely bilingual.

It must be remembered that the children were classified subjectively by their parents so that it can not be guaranteed

TABLE V
THE DEGREE OF BILINGUALISM OF THE
CHILDREN IN THE FRENCH AND
AMERICAN GROUPS

Degree of Bilingualism	French Sample			American Sample			Total
	Boys	Girls	sub total	Boys	Girls	sub total	
absolutely bilingual	4	4	8	4	2	6	14
bilingual-- 1 lang. dominant	8	3	11	7	5	12	24
1 language + some of other	6	8	14	4	3	7	22
1 language-- understand 2	4	1	5	3	2	5	12
too young to speak	2	1	3	-	2	2	5
monolingual	2	3	5	7	4	11	17
trilingual	-	-	-	3*	3*	6	8
number	25	22	47	27	20	47	94

*The trilingual children are included in the other numbers.

that all the children in each category were bilingual to the same degree.

Children's Characteristics

Mrs. Metraux found that the parents on her group listed certain characteristics, as shown in Table VI, which helped or hindered their children's learning of a second language. Parents of thirty-three of the French group noted such characteristics. In the American sample parents of only eleven children remarked that they had noticed such characteristics. Several of the American parents left this item unanswered, indicating perhaps that the question was not clear.

Some characteristics of the children who apparently learned two languages easily were:

1. The "talkers"--those children who spoke early and who seemed exceptionally gifted verbally; the highly verbal children who found it difficult to stop talking at any time. (French group: 6 boys, 6 girls--Total: 12.)

In the American group one girl and one boy were noted as having started talking very early and another girl was described as having verbal skill and being an avid reader. One boy's mother said that his good memory may have helped him. (Total: 4.)

TABLE VI

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILDREN
WHICH MAY HAVE HELPED OR HINDERED
THEIR BECOMING BILINGUAL

Characteristics		Number of Children	
		French Sample	American Sample
H	highly verbal	12	4
E	extrovert tendencies	12	4
S	adapt easily	11	
I	introvert tendencies	16	
M	conformity	5	
A	adapt with difficulty	4	
P	low physical energy	3	
	specific difficulties	3	
	each child reacts differently		3

2. Children with more extrovert tendencies. Mothers cited such traits as "outgoing, sociable, likes to show off, enjoys active games, likes to teach others, accepts friends easily in either language, enjoys prestige of an activity which is not always that of his friends or acquaintances." (French group: 6 boys, 6 girls--Total 12--cited as having one or several of these characteristics.)

American mothers also noticed some of the above items. One boy was said to be "rather alert." Two boys and one girl were credited with great physical energy, and two of these were also described as having extrovert tendencies. (Total: 4.)

3. Children who adapted well to change. Those who adjusted to a new situation easily and quickly. (French group: 3 boys, 8 girls--Total: 11.)

One American mother did not specify what her children's characteristics were, but she did say that each of her three children reacted differently to the learning of two languages.

No American mothers listed any characteristics which seemed to hinder a rapid learning of two languages, but Mrs. Metraux found the following about those children who tended to take longer to become bilingual:

1. Those with more introvert tendencies. Cited were such

characteristics as "shyer, more sensitive, must have motivations based on his own convictions and not those of others, more studious, more serious, a dreamer, not highly verbal." (9 boys, 7 girls--Total: 16.)

2. The conformists. This is an arbitrary term chosen to try to define the characteristics described. These characteristics may or may not combine with introvert tendencies. Cited were: "resistance to anything American in France; resistance to anything French in the United States; very upset when spoken English to on the street (in Paris); did not want mother to speak English in front of others who did not speak it; did not want parents to speak French at home, even in Paris, when they had always spoken English." (3 boys, 3 girls--Total: 6.)

3. Those children who adapted with difficulty to new situations. (2 boys, 2 girls--Total: 4.)

4. Children with less physical energy or lower drive in general, for whatever reason. Such characteristics as "frequently ill, interest and enthusiasm lag rapidly, needs to be prompted and encouraged more frequently in order to maintain ability and interest." (2 boys, 1 girl--Total: 3.)

5. Children with specific difficulties and/or patent stress reactions such as stuttering, delayed or arrested speech. (3 boys.)

Thus, from the experiences of both groups, especially the French, it would seem that all children did not necessarily learn languages easily. The personalities and abilities of the children varied and seemed to affect their becoming bilingual. The fact that a large percentage of the children in both groups did speak a second language might indicate that young people did learn languages with greater facility than their parents, but contrary to the myth, even children had some difficulties.

If a child had extrovert tendencies and met new situations with ease and confidence, he tended to become bilingual more easily. On the other hand, if a child were shy and sensitive, more introvert and less gifted verbally, he might encounter more difficulty in learning two languages.

Method vs. No Method

Of the seventeen sets of parents in the American group, thirteen indicated that they were attempting to rear their children bilingually. This included twenty boys and thirteen girls for a total of thirty-three of the forty-seven children. In the American sample the first or dominant language was English for all but three of the children. In the French group the problem was maintaining English as a second language.

Whatever the second language, the parents of both groups

were divided into two distinct categories:

1. Those who used definite methods and planned activities for teaching their children two languages; (French sample: 9 boys, 4 girls; American sample: 6 boys, 6 girls--Total: 25 children.)

2. Those who used no planned methods but depended on the situation and environment to encourage bilingualism. (French sample: 14 boys, 12 girls; American sample: 17 boys, 13 girls--Total: 56 children)

The following methods or teaching aids were used by the parents of the first category:

1. Picture books, games, stories, nursery rhymes, songs in the second language or in both languages. A certain period of the day was usually set aside for these activities. (French and American groups.)

2. All bedtime, eating, bathing, dressing, outing routines in English. (French group.)

3. Specific times for each language. (American group.)

4. Use of sing-song pronunciation games with the n, th, and r in English. (French group.)

5. One parent speaking one language; the other speaking another. (French and American groups.)

6. Cooperation between parents to provide vocabulary and concepts for new experiences for their children by allowing them to hear it from their father in French and their mother in English. (French group.)

7. Mother coached child in second language (French) before arriving in France. (French group.)

8. Child sent to private school or tutored in English before entering public school. (American group.)

9. Child, learning one language at school, taught the other language at home by his mother. (French and American groups.)

Among the environmental helps listed by the parents of both groups were the following:

1. Other people besides parents including grandparents, domestic help, neighbors, playmates, friends, cousins, brothers and sisters, and language students. (French and American groups.)

2. Vacations in and trips to other countries. (French and American groups.)

3. Summer camps. (French and American groups.)

4. School. (French and American groups.)

5. Helping children write letters to relatives. (French and American groups.)

6. Homework--child usually helped by parent most proficient in the language of instruction. (French and American groups.)

7. Puppet shows, records, books, magazines, radio, television, plays, operas, various lessons such as music and dancing, shopping expeditions, Sunday School, Scouts, and other activities in the school and community. (French and American groups.)

Although a larger proportion of the parents of each group indicated that they used no methods in teaching their children two languages but let bilingualism develop naturally, it would seem apparent that the distinction between method and no method was a fine one. Both groups took advantage of their surroundings and the environmental aids to bilingualism. According to Mrs. Metraux, her "method" and "no method" parents were equally satisfied with their children's progress in two languages. The American parents made no statement as to whether or not they were content.

Difficulties and How They Were Resolved

In the French group only five of forty-seven children were monolingual while in the American group twelve of forty-seven

spoke only one language. In some cases a second language was not undertaken; in others, it was discontinued for some reason. The American mother who returned the questionnaire unanswered said that it was difficult enough to teach her children one language. Others felt that family unity and identification with the community would be stronger if only one language were spoken. Obviously, only those parents who deemed bilingualism valuable or important tried to teach their children two languages, and even these parents encountered certain problems.

The following difficulties were cited by the parents in both groups:

The child's reactions:

A. His emotional reactions:

One American mother reported that her son began omitting syllables in both languages. Another mentioned that her two sons reacted to English by shouting rather than speaking it. These same boys had a slight fear of being ridiculed when they spoke English. Both groups of parents noticed that shyness and the other characteristics which were suggested as being possible hinderances to the learning of a second language were apparent in their children.

Parents in both groups specifically cited such reactions

as refusal to speak a second language and refusal to listen to the second language. The French mothers also indicated fits of temper, tears, verbal protests, and regressive or aggressive social or personal behavior as being problems. One American mother said that her five children exhibited a fear of not being able to succeed in the second language.

The parents in all cases seemed to handle each problem sympathetically and with respect and understanding of the individual child.

Mrs. Metraux said that the shy child was allowed to develop his own confidence gradually with playmates or friendly relations. Additional experiences outside the home reinforced his confidence in himself and his ability in two languages. The same solutions were indicated by two American mothers whose daughters were shy in nursery school but "outgrew it." Two American mothers felt that their explaining that speaking two languages was good and nothing to be ashamed of helped their children. One told her daughter about how many languages there were in the world and how fortunate she was to be able to speak two.

Mothers in the French group obliged their children who disliked being spoken to in the second language in front of others

by speaking the preferred language in those situations.

To combat stress reactions in the speech, French mothers discontinued the second language for as long as necessary to maintain the child's emotional well-being. The American who found that her four year old son omitted syllables from both languages eased up on the second language for a while. The mother whose sons spoke loudly calmed them with a quiet voice, gave them the example of her own behavior, and praised them as often as possible.

In handling the child who refused to speak the second language, the French parents continued giving him every opportunity to hear it. Often, providing records, stories, games and playmates was sufficient to overcome resistance. Other-times, parents left motivation to come from school, visits with relatives or trips in other countries.

The American mothers demonstrated the same sympathetic understanding by not forcing the children who refused to speak the second language. They too waited until the children found it necessary and exposed them to situations where they had to speak the second language to communicate.

The mother whose five children feared ridicule found that parental reassurance was helpful in building confidence. The

parents told the children that they realized that attending a foreign school was difficult and required much courage, that all they expected was that the children try their best, and that school credit would not be lost because of extra work previously done by the children.

B. The learning and adaptive process:

1. The preschool years:

a) Learning and forgetting a language easily before the age of six years: In the French group eight children were cited as having learned and forgotten at least one language before the age of six years. For several this occurred more than once, and for three children there were at least three languages involved. Only four American children were mentioned as having learned and forgotten a second language and for two of them, this happened twice.

Mrs. Metraux found that after six years of age there was less forgetting entirely. One language was maintained and another added with varying degrees of success. According to Mrs. Metraux, this was largely due to the fact that either the family stayed in one place after the child started school or schooling reinforced one language and the second language was continued with varying amounts of fluency.

In both groups the tendency for those children who knew two languages well would seem to have been that one language dominated over the other according to the environment. In France, French was dominant while in the United States, English was most often cited as the dominant language. After school entrance both languages were maintained although one parent stated that additional work was necessary to keep the second language alive.

Thus it may be inferred that learning a second language before the age of six years may possibly have been easier, but forgetting it was just as easy. For a young child to continue speaking two languages, he must have opportunities to use both to reinforce his knowledge or he may lose one of the languages.

After beginning school a child frequently began speaking the language of instruction with greater facility than he did the other, but both French and American parents found that the continuance of the second language in the home with reinforcement in the reading and writing of the language enabled its maintenance. A solid base of speaking, reading and writing a language prevented its being forgotten.

b) Rapport with specific individuals in each language: In the French group four children were cited as speaking a second or sometimes a third language only with the person from whom

they had learned the language. They often pretended not to understand the language if it were not spoken by the proper individual. These children were of preschool or early primary school age and once again demonstrate the need for emotional rapport when learning two languages. The parents reported that they did not interfere with these boundaries for, if they did, they were politely ignored until they spoke the accustomed language.

Two American mothers noted that their children would speak only English to others who spoke English, even if the others also knew the children's second language.

A similar problem that another American mother remarked upon was that her four year old daughter occasionally spoke her second language to her English speaking playmates. The mother's solution was to let the child establish for herself the groups to which each language should be spoken.

c) The language associated with discipline: One French mother, in attempting to eliminate poor French without discouraging the learning of the language, asked the French grandparents to assume the disciplinary role. The grandparents were pleased and the children responded well to their suggestions.

Two French mothers and one American mother noticed that the second language tended to be identified as the scolding language,

both at home and at school. Mothers and teachers were inclined to use their native tongues when they were angry and this may have influenced the children's reactions to the language.

d) How to maintain equally well-developed vocabularies in two languages: Several French mothers noticed the difficulty of maintaining equally well-developed vocabularies in both languages and employed teaching and play devices such as books, games, stories, records and songs to overcome the problem.

One French family shared experiences by recounting them in both languages, thus teaching the children any new words and concepts in both languages as new situations were encountered.

None of the American mothers offered suggestions specifically for the problem of maintaining vocabularies, although one mother noted that the problem existed. However, their use of teaching methods and environmental aids would tend to help achieve an equilibrium.

e) Accent: Two French mothers noticed an English accent in French, of long or short duration, in their children. However, the influence of friends and playmates countered the accent without correction exercises by the parents. The mothers who noted French accents in English instigated pronunciation games and relied on visits to the United States and parental example to correct them.

In the American group five mothers of eleven children remarked that their children had English accents in the second language. One mother reported that she tried to correct her children to no avail. The other mothers relied on environmental influences during trips to other countries to correct the situation. Still another mother said that her two children had accents in English which disappeared after more exposure to the language.

f) Developing positive attitudes toward all languages:

One French mother indicated that she and her husband tried to develop positive attitudes toward all languages by speaking the language of whatever country they were in and encouraging the children to do the same. She found that leaving the children with other children their own age was a good way to develop a positive attitude toward a language. Another French mother stated that as soon as her children could buy their own ice cream cones or other small items in a new language, they were no longer afraid of the language, and that it never took them long to do it no matter where they were.

The American mothers helped develop positive attitudes toward languages by explaining how many languages were spoken around the world and by travel in other countries.

2. School entrance and after:

a) School adaptation difficulties: Among the children

cited as having had school adaptation difficulties were ten from the French group and thirteen from the American group. These children encountered the following difficulties:

1. Insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction when they entered school so that they were unable to keep up with their age and grade group. (French and American groups.)

2. Changing from one educational system to another at a later age demanded that the children adapt to a different school program and teaching methods. (French and American groups.)

3. Reading, writing and speech difficulties which may or may not have been complicated by the second language. (French group.)

One French mother coached her child in French before moving to France. This facilitated his school adaptation. Other parents found that implementing school work with home instruction improved adjustment. Several French mothers were quite satisfied with their children's adaptation through a bilingual school which held "classes d'adaptation" where both languages were used according to the children's needs until they became proficient enough to continue in French.

One American mother sent her son to a private school until he was fluent enough in English to enter the public system. Another, upon moving to the United States, hired a tutor to coach her

fifteen year old son before he started classes. In the fall he was able to go to high school and competed well with the other children his age.

b) A second language only as a school subject: Of the French sample several children attended the American school in Paris. One parent felt that French was not learned rapidly enough when taught for only one period a day. Another parent said that her children spoke good French even though they attended the American school. However, the latter children had been in France longer and had been exposed to more environmental influences outside of the school.

Several of the American parents were dissatisfied with the language courses their children took in the schools. They protested that some of the teachers were not as fluent as they should be and, therefore, that the children did not learn the correct accent.

In the case of the children of visiting professor, English had been only a school subject until they arrived in the United States. With English being used every day, the children soon became fairly fluent, although the native language continued to dominate.

Social pressures and the reactions of others:

A. Grandparents and relatives: Several of the French

parents indicated hostility on the part of grandparents and relatives toward a second language that they could not understand. One American father insisted that the second language be discontinued when the family took up residence in the United States for fear that the additional pressures of a second language might be confusing to the children. The mother respected his wishes although she would like her children to be bilingual.

Mrs. Metraux reported that the relations between parents and in-laws were of primary importance and that confidence and good interpersonal relations as well as much work on the part of the parents to ameliorate the attitudes of the relatives in regard to the children and a second language were necessary. The extra effort was considered profitable to all concerned.

B. Friends and playmates: Several of the French mothers were concerned about teaching their children to know when it was impolite to speak a language that others might not understand. The parents, therefore, hoped that the children would follow their example in these situations. Another French mother found that if she translated obvious misunderstandings between her child and a playmate, both children were satisfied. Still another mother spoke the language of her child's playmates when they were near so as not to interrupt the rapport of the children. One American mother objected to the accent and faulty grammar of her children's

friends as being negative influences on her sons' English.

C. Religious instruction: One French mother found that a religious division within the family was reinforced by the language difference. As a result of religious instruction in French, English was undermined as was the mother's authority if she spoke English with the children. The mother did not indicate how she solved the problem but she did say that she applied herself to learning French particularly well.

The American parents encountered no problems in this area.

D. Advice of a specialist: Eight of the French mothers were advised by their pediatricians not to begin a second language until their children were four years old. The mothers found this difficult since the children were exposed to a bilingual situation much earlier. Some of the mothers tried to follow the advice while others allowed their children to learn two languages from the time they started talking. Both methods seemed to be equally successful according to the mothers' reports.

E. Insufficient contact with the second language: One American mother remarked that her principal difficulty in maintaining two languages was that the parents were the only available speakers of that language. A trip to visit grandparents

and relatives was of some help to the children, but the mother stated that additional work was necessary to keep the language alive.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICATION OF THE PARENTS' METHODS TO THE CLASSROOM

Although the majority of the parents in both groups stated that they used no specific methods in teaching their children two languages, all of the parents listed certain aids which they considered valuable to the process of becoming bilingual. From the results of their experiences the following school program for language study is recommended.

The language to be taught in the schools depends on the community. School authorities, before beginning the program, should study the community to find what languages besides English are present. In areas where there are large groups of Spanish speaking individuals, for example, the second language in the schools should be Spanish. Throughout the program community resources of natural bilinguals should be used as much as possible. Ideally, native speakers should be distributed among the English monolinguals at all levels. Teachers should be cautious, particularly in the early stages, to create positive attitudes toward the language. Praise and punishment should be bestowed equally in both languages. Constant reinforcement is necessary

so that the children do not forget what they have already learned.

Since younger children were shown to learn languages more easily, foreign language study should begin in kindergarten. At this level a certain period of the day such as story telling time could be devoted to the language. Simple play and word games could accompany the stories. Careful attention must be paid to the children's attitudes toward the language and the country it represents. Emphasis should be placed on the culture rather than on the language itself through the use of pictures, records and native speakers. If possible, the teacher should be a native speaker and, in any case, be thoroughly familiar with the language and the country.

In the elementary grades the reading and writing of English should be supplemented with the reading and writing of the second language. During the process of learning to read and write, the emphasis must forcibly be on the language, but still the teacher should treat it as he does English. Play activities should reinforce the academic work. Songs in the second language would increase vocabulary and decrease accent.

In the upper grades, history or some other subject matter should be taught in the second language for at least an hour a day. By this time the children would be fluent enough to read and discuss

in the second language. Foreign language films could be viewed and discussed. Certain grammar points could be introduced at this time. Being penpals with natives of the country would give the pupils additional rapport with the language as well as provide occasions to write and read the language.

At the high school level a subject matter should be taught in the language. At this stage literature would provide the best opportunity for language improvement and more familiarity with the culture. The presentation of a play would give an additional source of reinforcement of vocabulary and improvement of accent. At this level speakers might be invited to class to tell about vocational opportunities for bilinguals. Any community activities involving the second language should be recommended or even, on occasion, required of the students. The better qualified children could begin a third language at the high school level if they so desired.

Upon graduation the participants in this program should be ready for advanced language courses at a university if they plan to continue their education. In any case, they would be fairly fluent bilinguals, although English would undoubtedly be the dominant language.

The above program would not be feasible or even desirable

for all children in all communities. It would be most important to establish a foreign language program throughout the school system in areas where there is a large group of non-English speakers. However, even in totally English speaking regions, most children could derive both pleasure and profit from the learning of a second language if the curriculum is consistent and the teachers are skillful.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It was the purpose of this study 1) to find through a questionnaire if a group of bilingual parents in the Manhattan, Kansas area were rearing their children bilingually and, if so, what methods they were using; 2) to compile the results of the Manhattan questionnaire with those of a similar study done in the Paris, France, region by Ruth Metraux and reported in the April, 1965, issue of The French Review; and 3) to apply the results to the classroom teaching of a foreign language.

In comparing the fifty parents of the French group and the thirty-four of the American group, it was found that the French fathers, as indicated by their occupations, represented only the top 25 per cent of the population. Corresponding to this, they all had at least a college education. The American fathers, on the other hand, had occupations representing the entire population.

Their educations ranged from sixth grade to advanced professional degrees. The majority of the mothers in both groups did not work outside of the home. Most of the parents were in their thirties.

There were forty-seven children in the French sample and the same number in the American group. The age range of the former was from fifteen months to twenty-four years and of the latter, from six months to twenty-five years. The majority of the children of both groups were born in and attended school in their country of residence. Of the French group thirty-four children were bilingual to some extent, five spoke one language and understood another, three were too young to speak, and five were monolingual. In the American sample twenty-six children were termed bilingual, seven spoke one language and understood another, two were too young to talk, and twelve spoke only one language.

The parents of both groups listed certain personal characteristics of their children which they felt helped or hindered becoming bilingual. The characteristics regarded as favorable were:

1. Talking early, being highly verbal.
2. Extrovert tendencies and much physical energy.
3. Adapting easily to change.

The characteristics suggested as slowing the learning of two languages were:

1. Introvert tendencies.
2. Conformity.
3. Adaptation difficulties.
4. Low physical energy.
5. Speech difficulties.

The majority of the parents in both groups were attempting to rear their children bilingually. The parents of 28 per cent of the French children and 25 per cent of the Americans used specific methods or teaching aids. The rest relied on the environment to help their children become bilingual. Both groups were equally satisfied with their children's progress.

Methods or teaching aids mentioned included the following:

1. Picture books, games, stories, nursery rhymes, songs.
2. Certain daily routines in the second language.
3. Specific times for each language.
4. Pronunciation games.
5. Each parent speaking a different language.
6. Tutoring by parent or another person.
7. Private school.

The parents listed the following environmental helps:

1. Other people besides parents.
2. Vacations and trips in other countries.
3. Summer camps.
4. School.
5. Letter writing.
6. Parental help with homework.
7. Activities at school and in the community.

In the process of having their children learn two languages, certain difficulties were encountered by some of the parents.

These difficulties included the following:

1. Emotional reactions such as shyness, refusal to speak the second language, and stress reactions in the speech.
2. Forgetting a second language, particularly before the age of six years.
3. Speaking one language only with certain individuals.
4. One language associated with discipline.
5. Maintaining equally well-balanced vocabularies in both languages.
6. Accent.
7. Developing positive attitudes toward all languages.
8. School adaptation difficulties.

7. The second language only as a school subject.
10. Hostility of grandparents, relatives and friends to a second language.
11. Religious instruction in one language undermining the other.
12. Advice of doctors not to teach young children two languages.
13. Too little contact with the second language.

From the information presented it may be concluded that the French and American groups were not statistically comparable even though each sample contained forty-seven children. The American parents were fewer in number than the French parents and, more important, were more diverse in socio-economic status. However, it was not the purpose of this study to compare the groups but rather to compile from their experiences a list of methods and aids for teaching bilingualism, the problems encountered, and the parents' solutions to their difficulties. From these results a language program was formulated.

The one "method" considered necessary by all parents was a sympathetic understanding of the individual child. All aids were geared to the child in order to enhance his personal adjustment as well as his learning of two languages. Difficulties were handled in the same manner.

The recommended school program begins in kindergarten where a certain time of day is devoted to the language. Starting here and continuing throughout the program the aids and methods suggested by the parents should be utilized. These helps include songs, records, picture books, stories and community resources. In the elementary school a subject matter such as reading and, in the upper grades, history is taught in the language. High school language classes consist of extensive literature study. At all levels the program must be oriented to the needs of the children with care to consider individual differences and attitudes toward the language.

Because of the limited scope of this report, additional work on the subject of bilingualism and parents' methods of teaching it is recommended. A project following the development of a large number of bilinguals over a period of several years would give more valid information. It would also be valuable to study school and personal histories of a larger group of bilingual children in high school, using objective means to determine the degree of bilingualism.

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APPENDIX

1. Father's age _____ Mother's age _____
2. What is your highest degree of education? Father _____
Mother _____
3. What is your occupation? Father _____
Mother _____
4. What is your mother tongue (the language you first spoke as a child)?
Father _____ Mother _____
5. What other languages do you speak?
Father _____
Mother _____

Part II--The Children

1. How many children do you have? Boys _____ Girls _____
2. What are the ages of your children and what grade are they in?
Boys _____ Girls _____
3. Where were your children born (what country)? _____
4. Where have your children gone to school, or if they are under school age, where will they go to school? _____
5. What language did your children first speak? _____
6. What other languages do they speak? _____
7. Where did they learn them? _____

Part III--Bilingualism

Please indicate which of the choices best describes your children by circling the correct response. You may circle more than one answer. If none of the responses apply, please explain in the space following the choices.

1. Are you attempting to rear your children bilingually?

a. yes

b. no

2. Which of the following best describes your children? Please indicate the number in each category in the blank by the letter.

___ a. absolutely bilingual

___ b. bilingual with one language predominating (which language ___)

___ c. speak one language well plus a certain amount of a second language (which language is dominant ___)

___ d. speak one language, understand a second (which is spoken ___)

___ e. understand two languages but does not speak because of age

___ f. speak only one language

3. Did you notice any personal characteristics of your children which might have helped or hindered their becoming bilingual? Among these might be extrovert or introvert tendencies, much or little physical energy, verbal skill, etc.

a. yes

b. no

If yes, what were these characteristics?

4. Did you use any of the following items in helping your children to become bilingual?

a. picture books

b. records

c. songs

d. games

e. stories

f. none of the above

g. other _____

5. Did you use any of the following methods?

a. one parent speaking one language, the other speaking another

b. specific times for each language

c. school work supplemented by home instruction in the second language

d. some of the above

e. other _____

6. Did you let bilingualism develop naturally by speaking one language in the home and leaving the other to be learned at school and with playmates?

a. yes

b. no

7. Have any of the following been useful in the acquisition of two languages?

a. other people such as grandparents, playmates, friends, cousins, tutors

b. vacations in other countries

c. summer camps

d. school

e. letter writing

f. movies, books, radio, television

g. none of the above

h. other _____

8. Have your children had any of the following emotional problems?

- a. stress reactions such as stuttering
- b. refusal to speak the second language
- c. fear of being ridiculed
- d. shyness
- e. none of the above
- f. other _____

9. If you encountered any of the emotional problems, how did you handle them?

10. Have any of your children learned and forgotten a second language?

- a. yes
- b. no

If yes, would you please give the details as to his age when he learned and forgot, his sex, how well he knew the two languages, etc.

11. Do any of your children speak a particular language only to certain individuals or in certain situations?

- a. yes
- b. no

If yes, please explain.

12. Do your children have or have they ever had accents in either language?

a. yes

b. no

If yes, please note which language, at what age, and if you did anything to correct it.

13. Have your children had any school adaption difficulties?

a. yes

b. no

If yes, were any of the following factors partly responsible?

a. language of instruction not sufficiently known

b. changing school systems

c. reading and writing difficulties complicated by two languages

d. other _____

14. Have any of the following acted negatively on the learning of a second language?

a. hostility of grandparents to a second language

b. friends and playmates

c. doctor's advice not to teach a child two languages

d. none of the above

e. Other _____

15. If you would like to add anything else about how your children learned two languages, the problems you have encountered and how you solved them, please use the back of this page.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PARENTS' METHODS OF REARING CHILDREN BILINGUALLY
AND A POSSIBLE APPLICATION OF THEIR METHODS
IN A LANGUAGE PROGRAM FOR THE SCHOOLS

by

JANE LANIER ALBRECHT

B. A., University of Kansas, 1964

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

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1966

The purpose of this study was 1) to find through questionnaire if a group of bilingual parents in the Manhattan, Kansas, area were rearing their children bilingually and, if so, what methods they were using; 2) to compile the results of the Manhattan questionnaire with those of a similar study done by Ruth Metraux in the Paris, France, area and reported in the April, 1965, issue of The French Review; and 3) to apply the results to the classroom teaching of a foreign language.

The chief limitation of the study was the small sample of bilingual parents available in the Manhattan area. The two groups of parents were not comparable in socio-economic status, nor were they necessarily truly representative of the entire bilingual population.

The procedures followed were 1) to review the available literature; 2) to select the population of bilingual parents; 3) to administer the questionnaire; 4) to compile the data from the questionnaire; 5) to combine the data from the French group with that of the American group; and 6) to formulate a language program.

The majority of the parents in both groups were attempting to rear their children bilingually. Some parents, however, felt that bilingualism was not necessary or was harmful in some way so did not try to teach their children two languages; others encountered difficulties which caused them to drop or deemphasize one of the languages. The child's personal characteristics and emotional reactions as well as certain social pressures all entered

into the ease of acquisition of a second language.

Teaching methods or aids such as books, records, pictures and songs were used by only 27 per cent of the parents. The rest relied on environmental helps like community and school activities and trips to other countries to teach their children to be bilingual. A sympathetic understanding of the individual child was considered to be of utmost importance by all the parents. The "method" and "no method" parents were equally satisfied with their children's progress towards bilingualism.

The recommended school program suggested beginning language instruction in kindergarten and continuing it through high school. At least an hour a day would be devoted to the language with the emphasis being on subject matter rather than on the language itself. The parents' methods and aids--books, records, songs and community resources--would be utilized as much as possible.

Because of the limited scope of this report, it was recommended that further study be done on the subject of bilingualism and parents' methods of teaching two languages. Research tracing the development of bilingual children over a period of several years would be valuable as would a study of the personal and school histories of a large number of older bilingual children.

